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Preparing For Duty at Role 3 Hospital in Afghanistan

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By Lt. Monique Overfield, Patient Administration Department Head, Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi, Texas

Lt. Monique Overfield prepares for deployment to Afghanistan at the Navy Expeditionary Medical Training Institute at Camp Pendleton, Calif. (Photo by Mass Communications Specialist 1st Class Bruce Cummins)

From the time I enlisted in the Navy, I had one goal – to help other people. The first 16 years of my career I was a hospital corpsman. It was then that I decided to become an Medical Service Corps officer. Since the initial day at my first command as an officer, I had asked to be deployed. I wanted to give back to the Navy that had done so much for me. With the help of my commanding officer, DFA and specialty leader, 15 months after arriving, I was selected and on my way to train for Operation Enduring Freedom in Kandahar, Afghanistan, as a patient administration officer.

Many of my peers couldn't understand why I was so excited to go. Many made comments such as, "I'm so sorry," and "Why couldn't they pick someone else?" I wanted to be deployed, even though I know I made a difference at my command. I wanted to have the experience of being deployed – making a difference in the field and gaining knowledge that only a deployment can offer. Now, as I am in my third week of preparations and training, I am met with mixed feelings of excitement, anxiety and fear.

The more training we receive, the more real it becomes. Watching clips of IEDs exploding and what they can do to a Soldier, Marine, Sailor, or Airmen intensified these feelings. Working with wounded and many times amputated individuals after they left the field at my command could not prepare me enough to having the trauma happen right in front of me. Stories of gunshots, amputations, and blasts fill my dreams at night and often wake me up as I think, "Am I ready for this, and what in the world was I thinking by volunteering and asking for this deployment?"

As I move forward with my training, I have four weeks until I am "boots on the ground." I don't expect that my feelings and thoughts will decrease, but I expect them to amplify immensely. The training we all receive is designed to prepare us for this deployment, but I think nothing can prepare you for the sights of war from the front line. It will prepare me for

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what's to come, and I am secure in knowing I will be able to give something back to the military to which I have dedicated my life.

I have left behind my husband of 16 years, and 12- and 10-year-old sons. It saddens me to think I am hurting them and missing birthdays and anniversaries. My family may never truly understand my passion, and perhaps they are angry that I can leave so easily. But, they are supporting me. Then I remember it's not about me. It's about those men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice or have gone before me to defend others' freedom, including my own.

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Melinda Hersh (@twingals)
LT. Monique Overfield , You are a true patriot, thank you to you and your family for your service. As a mother and someone in the medical field, I can not imagine myself being in your shoes.....bless you and your family and your military family. Stay safe and be well.

Denise Bates
LT. Overfield you are a remarkable women and sailor, I am very proud to call you my friend. Thank you and the other men and women who sacifice their lives and family to keep us all safe. God Bless...see you soon.

Peter Roberts
LT, I am confident your deployment will give you tremendous learning opportunities and am hopeful that is will give you a sense of fulfillment and be a highpoint of your navy career. You will not be leaving your husband and sons behind. You are simply not taking them with you in the physical sense. The connectivity in Kandahar is quite good. It will be difficult for them, but the sadness will fade; the pride will be enduring. We look forward to your arrival.
CAPT Roberts
XO, NATO ROLE 3 MMU, Kandahar, Afghanistan

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